CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A computer system for distributed collaborative computing, the system comprising:

a plurality of server computers connected to a plurality of client computers via a global-area computer network;

a high-speed direct connection link connecting the plurality of server computers; and

a computer program executable by the server computers, wherein the computer program comprises computer instructions for:

conducting an on-line conference among an arbitrary number of the client computers connected to an arbitrary number of the server computers over the global-area network and the high-speed direct connection link; and

sharing an application program executed on one of the client computers on an arbitrary number of other client computers.

2. The computer system of claim 1, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

spawning one or more processes on the server computers controlling the execution of the shared application program;

monitoring the operational status of the spawned processes; and

spawning a new process in the event failure of a spawned process is detected.

3. The computer system of claim 1, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

viewing a document stored on one of the client computers on an arbitrary number of other client computers.

4. The computer system of claim 1, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

detecting a failure of one of the server computers handling the on-line conference;

disconnecting the failed server computer from the on-line conference;

connecting another of the server computers to the conference; and

resuming the on-line conference.

5. The computer system of claim 1, further comprising a database, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

storing information about the status of the on-line conference in the database.

6. The computer system of claim 1, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

ensuring that a maximum number of authorized conference participants in not exceeded.

7. A method of operating a distributed collaborative computing system comprising a plurality of server computers, the method comprising:

conducting an on-line conference among an arbitrary number of the client computers connected to an arbitrary number of the server computers over the global-area network and the high-speed direct connection link; and

sharing an application program executed on one of the client computers on an arbitrary number of other client computers.

8. The method claim 7, further comprising:

spawning one or more processes on the server computers controlling the execution of the shared application program;

monitoring the operational status of the spawned processes; and

spawning a new process in the event failure of a spawned process is detected.

9. The method of claim 7, further comprising:

viewing a document stored on one of the client computers on an arbitrary number of other client computers.

10. The method of claim 7, further comprising:

detecting a failure of one of the server computers handling the on-line conference;

disconnecting the failed server computer from the on-line conference;

connecting another of the server computers to the conference; and

resuming the on-line conference.

11. The method of claim 7, wherein the distributed collaborative computing system further comprises a database and the method further comprises:

storing information about the status of the on-line conference in the database.

12. The method of claim 7, further comprising:

ensuring that a maximum number of authorized conference participants in not exceeded.

13. A computer-readable storage medium storing a computer program executable by a plurality of server computers, the computer program comprising computer instructions for:

conducting an on-line conference among an arbitrary number of the client computers connected to an arbitrary number of the server computers over the global-area network and the high-speed direct connection link; and

sharing an application program executed on one of the client computers on an arbitrary number of other client computers.

14. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 13, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

spawning one or more processes on the server computers controlling the execution of the shared application program;

monitoring the operational status of the spawned processes; and

spawning a new process in the event failure of a spawned process is detected.

15. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 13, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

viewing a document stored on one of the client computers on an arbitrary number of other client computers.

16. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 13, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

detecting a failure of one of the server computers handling the on-line conference;

disconnecting the failed server computer from the on-line conference;

connecting another of the server computers to the conference; and

resuming the on-line conference.

17. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 13, further comprising a database, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

storing information about the status of the on-line conference in the database.

18. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 13, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

ensuring that a maximum number of authorized conference participants in not exceeded.